Aquatic Conservation Focus Areas in Greatest Need (Tier I)

Lower Missouri River (175 River Miles)



Figure 25. Lower Missouri River Focus Area

The Lower Missouri River area consists of badlands, breaks, coulees, and gently rolling hills. The river runs approximately 180 river miles from Fort Peck Dam to the North Dakota border. The section of river from the dam to the town of Wolf Point is uncharacteristically cool and clear, as water discharged from the bottom of the reservoir is devoid of sediment and very cold. Along with many native fish species, this area is occupied by non-native trout species. Even with flows from the Milk River, this section does not return to warmwater habitat until it reaches the town of Wolf Point, approximately 70 river miles downstream. From here to the North Dakota border the Missouri remains warm, with warmwater tributaries like the Poplar River, Red Water River, and Big Muddy Creek. The adjacent land along the Lower Missouri is primarily cottonwood-willow bottomlands and irrigated cropland. As with the area immediately below Fort Peck Dam, this area supports paddlefish, pallid sturgeon, shovelnose sturgeon, sauger, goldeye, and blue sucker, along with many other native fish species.

Associated Habitats

Habitat Type	Habitat Tier	Acres	Miles
Lowland Lakes	III	3,021	
Lowland Reservoirs	III	374	
Mixed Source Rivers			
(Intermountain and Prairie Flow)	II		175
Prairie Streams	1		3,228

Associated Species of Greatest Conservation Need (Tier I Species)

There are a total of 55 aquatic species that are found within the Lower Missouri River Focus Area. Tier I species are listed below. All associations can be found in Table 29.

Fish: Pallid Sturgeon, Paddlefish, Shortnose Gar, Sturgeon Chub, Sicklefin Chub, Pearl Dace, Blue Sucker, Burbot, and Sauger

Conservation Concerns & Strategies

Culverts, dams, irrigation diversions, and other instream barriers that fully or partially impede fish movement and reduce connectivity of habitat Modification and degradation of stream channels caused by various construction or land management practices Riparian vegetation effected by range and forest management practices and streamside residential development (such activities destabilize streambanks, increase sediment inputs, reduced shading, and remove woody debris) Modification of stream channels or streambanks to a condition that simulates their natural form and function Support government and private conservation activities that encourage and support sustainable land management practices in riparian areas Modification of riparian management practices such that riparian vegetation is allowed to recover Develop statewide riparian best management principles Entrainment of juvenile and adult fishes by irrigation diversions or other water intakes Alterations of the quantity or timing of stream flows, causing dewatering or unnatural flow fluctuations that diminish the quantity or quality of essential habitats Water chemistry problems that arise due to municipal discharge, irrigation	Conservation Concerns	Conservation Strategies	
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,	return water, and other sources	source pollutants	

Unnatural hydrograph and water	Work with appropriate authorities to
temperatures associated with the	restore hydrograph that mimics the
presence and operations of large dams	natural regime
Non-native fish species	Support activities to promote natural
	habitats that support native species